
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2019AGRI0117-001999
Oct. 17, 2019

Ministry of Agriculture

B.C. communities to benefit from two new regional food hubs

Updated Oct. 17, 2019, for clarification

VANCOUVER – Port Alberni and Surrey will be home to B.C.’s newest regional food hubs, which help farms and food processing businesses innovate and grow, create jobs and strengthen local economies.

Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture, announced up to \$1.5 million for the two new facilities at Commissary Connect, the province’s first food hub based on Laurel Street in Vancouver. A second food hub is being developed in Quesnel, which will be accessible to farmers and processors throughout the Cariboo.

“B.C.’s agriculture sector is strong, growing and diversified, and these two new food hubs will help small processors get started and existing businesses expand their product lines and develop new markets,” Popham said. “This investment will grow the local economies, create jobs and provide more business opportunities for farmers, fishers and processors, as well as support food safety and security in B.C.”

A food hub is a centralized shared-use food and beverage processing facility that provides business owners with affordable access to production facilities, specialized equipment, new technology, research and development, expertise and services. The hubs will bring more opportunities for farmers, ranchers and wild harvesters to increase revenue by adding value to their products.

The Port Alberni Full-Scale Food Processing and Innovation Hub will be operated by the Port Alberni Port Authority and primarily serve seafood processors. The Plenty & Grace Full-Scale Food Processing and Innovation Hub in Surrey will primarily serve plant-based food processors. Both hubs will help clients research and develop innovative products; grow their businesses and support the local economy, community and farmers; as well as create local jobs for Indigenous peoples and others under-represented in the work force. The hub operators were selected through a competitive request for proposals.

“This region is rich with opportunities to grow the local food processing sector, and this new food hub will help businesses increase product value and revenues, expand production and employ more people in the community,” said Scott Fraser, MLA for Mid-Island Pacific Rim. “I want to congratulate the local businesses, Indigenous communities, North Island College, Port Alberni Port Authority, City of Port Alberni and all the partners that came together to make this project a reality.”

The new facilities will also help build and connect future regional food hubs in other communities to create the B.C. Food Hub Network, which will support continued growth and

innovation in B.C.'s processing sector. The network will also help grow the packaging and marketing of B.C. food products and expand the production of B.C. food for local consumption and export to world markets.

The food hubs are part of the Province's Feed BC initiative, which is increasing the use of local food in all aspects of the food supply chain: farmers and food producers, processors, distributors and public facilities where food is prepared and served. Feed BC is a key priority for the Ministry of Agriculture, which is committed to encouraging more food and beverage processing in B.C.

Quotes:

Aart Schuurman Hess, CEO, Goodly Foods –

"As an anchor tenant, Goodly Foods has been part of B.C.'s first regional food hub since it opened in January 2019. We have been able to scale up our production to include three new soups, while creating full-time work for people who have experienced barriers to employment. As we work toward Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point certification, we are grateful to have access to a state-of-the-art food processing facility and strong partnerships with all the food processors using the facility. Goodly Foods is also proud to be a part of the BuyBC program that is also supporting local food growers and producers."

Pat Deakin, economic development manager, City of Port Alberni –

"The city is thrilled to receive funding from the Province that will leverage significant commitments made by our public and private-sector partners. The facility will be owned and operated by the Port Alberni Port Authority, which has committed \$500,000 to the hub. This is a legacy project that will increase the viability of local food producers, while helping grow this sector throughout the region, spurring the economy and creating good jobs in the community."

Lee Murphy, president, Plenty & Grace Co. Ltd. –

"Plenty & Grace is excited to partner with the Ministry of Agriculture and the B.C. Food Hub Network to create a new food hub and innovation centre in the Fraser Valley. By collaborating and connecting with Fraser Valley farmers and value-added producers, our overarching goal is to highlight the best of B.C. We believe, together with the other food hubs in B.C., we will enhance, encourage and support agri-food businesses to increase demand for B.C. products around the world."

Quick Facts:

- B.C.'s food and beverage processors produce approximately \$10 billion worth of value-added products each year.
- B.C.'s agriculture, seafood and food processing sectors experienced record revenues in 2018, reaching \$15 billion for the first time.
- In 2018, 2,300 more people started working in B.C.'s agriculture industry, bringing the total to 63,400.
- The Province has committed \$8.3 million over a three-year period (2018-19 to 2020-21) to develop the B.C. Food Hub Network.

Learn More:

Feed BC:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/growbc-feedbc-buybc/feed-bc>

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